

DEFENSE NUCLEAR FACILITIES SAFETY BOARD

MEMO TO: Timothy Dwyer, Technical Director
FROM: Rory Rauch, Pantex Site Representative
SUBJECT: Pantex Plant Report for Week Ending June 1, 2012

Procedure Adherence: This week, a PXSO facility representative discovered two-way, hand-held radios in a prohibited area. Impairment and Restoration (I&R) personnel were restoring a deluge fire suppression system when they noticed that their electric transportation cart needed charging. They brought the cart, on which they had left two hand-held radios, into the equipment room and connected it to an electrical outlet that was not approved for cart charging (cart charging outlets must have the proper power rating, must be in an area with sufficient ventilation, and must be in an area with fire suppression capability to adhere to consensus electrical safety and fire protection standards). The equipment room door and a co-located barrier each contained postings prohibiting the presence of hand-held radios in the equipment room. This restriction is in place to prevent the inadvertent activation of the deluge fire suppression system, which is activated by a detector module that is not shielded from radio-frequency signals. During the critique for the event, the I&R personnel indicated that they observed and understood the postings, but forgot that the radios were on the cart.

Overland Palletized Unit Shipper (OPUS): The Office of Secure Transportation plans to implement a new specialized shipping container called the OPUS to support over-the-road transportation of warheads in safeguards transporters. At Pantex, this change will only affect the process for receiving or sending offsite shipments (i.e., OPUS hardware will not be used for moves between the Zone 4 and Zone 12 material access areas). On May 1, NA-12 approved the nuclear explosive safety (NES) master study addendum for the use of OPUS hardware at Pantex. The NES study group identified no findings. B&W plans to finalize the contractor readiness assessment (RA) of operations with OPUS hardware early next week, at which time NNSA plans to commence its RA. PXSO plans to authorize operations with OPUS hardware by July 2012.

Anomalous Unit: Last week, B&W transmitted the information engineering release requesting weapon response information from the design agency (DA) to support the development of the justification for continued operations on the most recent anomalous unit (see 4/27/12 report). Currently, the proposed process for disassembling this unit involves stabilizing an anomalous crack on a high explosive charge using tape and finishing charge separation using an implement with a relatively low melting point. The DA anticipates providing final weapon response information by the end of June.

Fire Protection: This week, PXSO issued a memo to B&W documenting a number of recent fire suppression system management and maintenance issues. The memo discusses recent events involving a deluge system that failed to activate on demand and the failure to enter a limiting condition of operation for the deluge system prior to performing work in the affected facility (see 3/30/12 and 5/25/12 reports, respectively). The memo also describes an inadvertent deluge activation in a high explosive operations facility, crafts personnel preconditioning a fire suppression system detection system by cleaning the ultra-violet detector heads prior to performing surveillance testing, and deluge valves not being trip tested per manufacturer specifications. PXSO requested that B&W provide a response within 45 days with an evaluation of these issues for similar causes, trends, and extent-of-condition.